

SUCCESS Stories of English Teachers Teaching Reading to Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Learners Through an Interpretative Phenomenological ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research provided a thorough understanding of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing education by revealing the lived experiences of English teachers instructing DHH learners across various learning environments. Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), the study selected eight public school English teachers as informants from within the Surigao del Sur Division during the school year 2024–2025, of which the primary data source consisted of in-depth interviews. The study illuminated how teachers adapted, scaffolded, and innovated their practices to support DHH learners' reading development. Further, six superordinate themes emerged: the emphasis on multimodal and multisensory instruction; the prioritization of visual scaffolding as foundational; the adaptation and simplification of content to meet learners' developmental levels; the creation of inclusive and supportive learning environments; the adoption of flexible and nonverbal assessment methods; and the cultivation of resourcefulness amidst instructional limitations. The findings underscored the significance of using multimodal strategies, visual scaffolding, differentiated content, inclusive environments, flexible assessments, and adaptability in teaching DHH learners. By amplifying the voices of experienced teachers, the study offered critical insights for educators, administrators, and policymakers aiming to build a more inclusive, responsive educational system that fosters the growth and literacy development of DHH learners.

KEYWORDS: *experiences, successful teachers, deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) learners, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), Philippines.*

INTRODUCTION

English Language Teaching (ELT) should be adaptive, inclusive, and deeply responsive to the unique needs of every learner, especially those who experience the world differently, such as deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) learners. For DHH learners, ELT often necessitates specialized instructional strategies that accommodate their language needs, including visual learning methods, sign language integration, and multimodal approaches as it refers to the instruction of English as a subject or second language, encompassing the development of speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills (Caupayan & Pogoy, 2021). Specifically in the context of reading instruction, educators encounter significant challenges in supporting deaf and hard-of-hearing learners' development of phonemic awareness, word recognition, and comprehension skills, as traditional reading methods heavily depend on auditory processing.

The complexities of teaching reading to DHH learners necessitate targeted interventions that address their linguistic and cognitive challenges. Furthermore, teaching reading involves systematic instruction in decoding, fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension, which are fundamental to literacy acquisition (Prior, 2023). However, for DHH learners, reading development is often hindered by a lack of auditory input, making phonemic awareness and decoding particularly challenging (Shongwe, 2021). Research identifies common reading difficulties among DHH learners, including limited exposure to print, difficulties in understanding sentence structures, and struggles with word recognition and meaning-making (Mokala, 2023). Additionally, challenges such as low motivation, inadequate instructional support, and insufficient accessibility to reading materials in sign language further complicate literacy development (Anaba, 2023).

International studies across Asia reveal the persistent challenges in teaching reading to DHH learners. In Japan, Nakamura (2021) emphasized the need for bilingual reading instruction that connects Japanese Sign Language and written text. Caupayan and Pogoy (2021) found that in Malaysia, despite using interactive and sign-supported strategies, educators struggled with improving reading fluency and comprehension due to the lack of standardized methods and diverse language backgrounds of DHH learners. Takahashi et al. (2018) showed that DHH children aged 5–7 outperformed hearing peers in early reading, but unlike hearing learners whose reading was predicted by phonological awareness (PA), DHH learners' reading predicted their PA indicating the need for

interventions tailored to linguistic and developmental differences. In Saudi Arabia, Alqraini (2022) found that teachers' knowledge in four key reading components phonemic awareness, letter-sound correspondence, vocabulary, and comprehension was positively linked to better reading outcomes, underscoring the importance of professional development and systematic instructional support for DHH education.

International research highlights common challenges in teaching reading to DHH learners, it also underscores the urgent need for targeted professional development and adequate resource allocation in the Philippine context. Despite the enactment of the Filipino Sign Language Act of 2018 (R.A. 11106) which mandates the use of FSL as the primary medium of instruction for deaf education implementation remains difficult, especially in rural areas due to a shortage of qualified signing teachers and FSL interpreters. Lopez (2024) reports a troubling interpreter-to-deaf ratio of 1:1000 in the country. In urban settings like Quezon City, teachers are still uncertain whether their strategies meet the demands of high-level inclusive education (Muega, 2019), and Balanquit (2021) insists that FSL should be fully integrated into the basic education curriculum.

Studies in Cebu City (Delfin et al., 2023; Macabenta et al., 2023) reveal a continued gap in understanding how local teachers cope with the challenges of inclusive education, even as its goals are widely accepted. These findings stress the necessity of exploring the lived experiences of teachers in more remote areas like Hinatuan, Surigao del Sur, where limited resources may exacerbate existing issues. A phenomenological approach is thus warranted to delve into how English teachers adapt their instruction to the needs of DHH learners. As Florian and Spratt (2013) argue, teachers' ability to implement inclusive education is shaped significantly by their confidence and competence, which in turn are influenced by ongoing professional development and practical experience. Capturing these personal and context-specific teaching experiences requires an interpretative phenomenological lens to better understand and support inclusive education in under-resourced settings.

Effective implementation of inclusive education posits that teachers must have access to appropriate resources and continuous professional development. Scruggs and Mastropieri (2017) found that those who receive specialized training are better equipped to address diverse learner needs, including those of DHH learners. Forlin et al. (2014) further emphasized that educators in inclusive settings become more effective when adequately

supported with training and tools—especially crucial when overcoming communication barriers in teaching DHH learner.

However, individual readiness and experiences vary across contexts. Alias and Ramly (2021) highlighted the benefits of collaboration between general and special education teachers in both mainstream and special settings, reinforcing the importance of examining multiple influencing factors. Notably, no prior study has explored these variables in the context of Hinatuan, Surigao del Sur, prompting the need for this investigation.

The researcher ultimately aims to publish the findings in regional, national, or international scientific journals, contributing to the advancement of inclusive education and English language instruction for DHH learners. The study's insights may inspire further research and inform educational practices and policy. To broaden impact, the findings will be shared through partnerships with schools, DHH advocacy groups, online platforms, and educational institutions, with the goal of empowering stakeholders through research-based strategies for inclusive teaching, curriculum enhancement, and systemic reform.

Research Questions

1. What are the strategies of successful English teachers teaching reading to deaf and hard-of-hearing learners in Hinatuan, Surigao del Sur?
2. How do they make sense of their experiences about teaching reading to deaf and hard-of-hearing learners?

Theoretical Lens

This paper examines effective reading instruction for DHH learners combining Smith's (2007) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) Theory with Vygotsky's (1978) Socio-Cultural Theory. Emphasizing the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), Vygotsky's theory underlines the part performed by social interaction, cultural tools, and scaffolding where teachers provide methodically eliminated structured support as learners acquire competency. Techniques like reciprocal teaching, which promotes cooperative communication between teachers and learners, especially help DHH learners who depend on visual and social cues to develop reading skills. Complementing this, IPA provides a qualitative lens through which teachers view and interpret their own experiences in guiding DHH learners. By means of a dual interpretative process, the reflections of the participants and the analyses of the researchers expose ideas on instructional strategies, difficulties, and more general contextual

influences. These ideas taken together highlight the importance of reflective practice and organized support in bridging cognitive development with experience to guide inclusive and successful reading instruction.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design. This study used IPA in a qualitative research design to investigate English teachers' lived experiences while teaching reading to DHH learners. Anchored in Bhandari's (2024) definition of qualitative research as the analysis of non-numerical data to understand perspectives and experiences, the use of IPA enabled a nuanced investigation of the personal and professional meanings embedded in teachers' instructional practices. The approach helped to identify emergent and superordinate themes by realizing that individual perceptions, social settings, and past events shape meaning-making (Smith et al., 2022).

Research Locale. The study was carried out in Hinatuan, Surigao del Sur, more especially at two public schools: Hinatuan National Comprehensive High School and Hinatuan South Central Elementary School. These sites were chosen deliberately depending on accessibility and the researcher's familiarity with the setting. Purposive snowball sampling was used to select eight English teachers under guided inclusion criteria including a minimum of one year of experience teaching DHH learners, participation in Filipino Sign Language (FSL) training, current engagement with DHH learners, and shown effectiveness in teaching reading to this population.

Data Source. The primary data source for this qualitative study was the in-depth interviews conducted with selected public school English teachers from School A and School B of Surigao del Sur Division. In-depth interviews served as a crucial method in qualitative research, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and insights regarding ELT for DHH learners.

Data Gathering Procedures. Data collection was carried out through in-depth, open-ended interviews, which created space for participants to openly share their instructional experiences with DHH learners. These conversations offered rich, detailed insights into their teaching practices, challenges, and successes. Prior to data gathering, the study received ethical clearance from the UIC Graduate School and the Research Ethics Committee, and formal approval was obtained from the Surigao del Sur Schools Division. Participants were fully

informed about the purpose and procedures of the research, and their voluntary participation was ensured through informed consent. Throughout the process, ethical considerations were prioritized where participants' identities were kept confidential, their emotional well-being was respected, and all information was securely managed in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Data Analysis. The analysis began with the transcription of interviews, followed by a careful process of member checking to confirm accuracy. The researcher engaged in repeated readings and close annotation of the data to fully grasp the depth of each narrative. From this, initial codes were developed, leading to the identification of emerging and superordinate themes through an inductive and interpretative lens. This approach not only revealed recurring patterns across participants' accounts but also honored the individuality of each teacher's perspective, ultimately offering a deeper, more human-centered understanding of their pedagogical experiences in teaching reading to DHH learners.

Ethical Considerations. Approved under Protocol Code GS-ER-03-25-0248 (Expedited Review), this qualitative study adhered strictly ethical standards judged by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Immaculate Conception. Maintaining the values of social value, informed consent, participant vulnerability, risk-benefit balance, confidentiality, justice, transparency, researcher competency, sufficient of institutional support, and community involvement, the review assured that the research presented no damage to participants. It aimed to enhance inclusive education by means of research on the lived experiences of English teachers supervising DHH learners and by supporting reasonable, equitable methods of literacy education.

RESULTS

Report of Participant Findings

Teacher 1. Teacher 1 emphasized several effective strategies that have shaped her approach to inclusive education. Among the core strategies she highlighted were employing a multi-layered and multisensory approach to scaffold reading skills, utilizing visual aids, sign language, and accessible media to strengthen instruction, adjusting the learning environment to meet the unique sensory and visibility needs of DHH learners, nurturing her own professional

growth and commitment to inclusive education through teaching experiences, and experiencing breakthrough moments with learners that affirmed her sense of purpose as an educator.

Teacher 2. Teacher 2 shared rich experiential insights from teaching learners who are DHH. She emphasized several transformative strategies that shaped her commitment to inclusive education. Central to her approach were utilizing multisensory and tactile strategies to build foundational reading skills, employing visual aids and customized materials to enhance access and comprehension, adapting to the unique pacing and attention levels of DHH learners, developing deep empathy and emotional connection through teaching, and finding personal transformation in witnessing breakthroughs in her learners' literacy development.

Teacher 3. Teacher 3 highlighted the importance of simplifying language and emphasizing key vocabulary, explaining that clear instructions and focused keywords empower DHH learners to navigate reading texts with greater confidence. Additionally, she noted that visual technologies and videos significantly boost learners' interest, participation, and reading comprehension, making learning more dynamic and accessible. Witnessing the success of DHH learners, particularly when they achieve proficiency in reading, fills Teacher 3 with pride and reaffirms the transformative power of inclusive education. Through her teaching experiences, she has developed deeper empathy, a stronger commitment to inclusion, and a profound appreciation for deaf culture, further strengthening her dedication as an educator. Teacher 3 emphasized that the integration of FSL and multisensory strategies enables clearer comprehension and greater engagement for DHH learners. She shared how using sign language, alongside various multisensory materials, helps learners easily grasp concepts and stay connected to the lessons.

Teacher 4. Teacher 4 shared valuable insights from her experiences teaching learners who are DHH, emphasizing key strategies that have shaped her approach to inclusive education. One of the most effective tools she found in supporting DHH learners' reading engagement was the use of video lessons with scripts, subtitles, and peer explanations. This method provided a multisensory experience, enabling learners to engage with content more effectively. In addition, Teacher 4 highlighted the importance of simplifying language, using visuals, and positioning learners strategically within the classroom to help them access reading materials more easily. She made sure to

seat learners in a way that maximized their visual access to the board and her facial expressions, which were essential for understanding the lessons. Peer support also played a significant role in fostering inclusion, enhancing comprehension, and addressing behavioral challenges. Classmates' explanations helped make lessons more interactive and accessible for DHH learners. Teacher 4 also expressed how small learning gains from her learner brought meaningful fulfillment to her as an educator, especially when learner demonstrated understanding with the help of peers and scripts. Furthermore, teaching DHH learner inspired Teacher 4 to become more patient, creative, and eager to pursue additional training in special education, reinforcing her commitment to inclusive practices.

Teacher 5. Teacher 5 shared insightful experiences drawn from her work with a learner who is DHH. She highlighted several effective strategies that have shaped her approach to inclusive education. One key element she emphasized was the use of a bilingual and visual-based approach tailored to the unique communication styles of DHH learners. By integrating both sign language and written language, she made reading more accessible and effective. Teacher 5 also focused on scaffolded visual learning techniques, such as story maps, graphic organizers, and sentence frames, which built comprehension step by step. These tools helped the learner break down complex ideas and gain a clearer understanding of reading materials. In addition, Teacher 5 adapted her teaching materials by incorporating visuals, prompts, and glossaries, which reduced cognitive load for her learner and boosted his confidence in expressing his ideas. She noted that breakthrough moments, such as when a learner independently wrote or completed a summary, showcased the impact of patient, structured instruction. Lastly, Teacher 5 reflected on how teaching DHH learner transformed her into a more flexible, empathetic, and student-centered professional. These experiences deepened her commitment to providing the best support for all learners, emphasizing the importance of adaptability and empathy in teaching.

Teacher 6. Teacher 6 reflected on how teaching DHH learner helped her grow as a teacher. It built her creativity, patience, and sense of purpose in reaching every learner, inspiring her to continuously adapt her teaching practices to meet the diverse needs of her learners. One strategy she highlighted was the use of drawing and matching tasks, which allowed the DHH learner to express his understanding non-verbally. These tasks helped the learner build conceptual knowledge by engaging him in activities that reinforced the meaning

of words and ideas through visual representation. Teacher 6 also noted that peer support plays a crucial role in creating inclusion and improving reading comprehension in mixed-ability classrooms. By fostering an environment where classmates could help explain materials and share insights, the overall learning experience became more interactive and supportive. For Teacher 6, small, visual-based breakthroughs were incredibly rewarding, as they confirmed learner learning and provided emotional fulfillment. These moments, such as a learner successfully interpreting a concept through a drawing or visual summary, demonstrated the effectiveness of her patient, tailored approach. Finally, Teacher 6 shared valuable insights from her experiences working with a DHH learner. She emphasized that visual aids and simplified instructional materials are foundational to teaching reading to DHH learner, making abstract concepts more accessible and tangible.

Teacher 7. Teacher 7 shared profound insights gained from her experiences teaching a DHH learner. She emphasized that pre-teaching vocabulary and using consistent visual supports are key strategies in building comprehension for DHH learner. These approaches provide the learner with the foundational understanding needed to tackle more complex material, ensuring that he grasps essential concepts before engaging with the main content. These approaches provide the learner with the foundational understanding needed to tackle more complex material, ensuring that he grasps essential concepts before engaging with the main content. Teacher 7 also highlighted the effectiveness of combining images, short texts, and visual storytelling to scaffold DHH learner's ability to understand and retell information. By integrating visual elements with brief written content, the learner was able to make connections between words and images, which facilitated both comprehension and memory retention. In addition, Teacher 7 used visual storytelling and non-verbal tasks to empower her DHH learner to demonstrate his understanding without relying on spoken language.

Teacher 8. Teacher 8 shared valuable insights from her experience teaching with a DHH learner, emphasizing the importance of visual scaffolding using simplified texts, charts, and vocabulary aids. She highlighted the powerful role of visual technology and multimedia outputs, such as signed videos and animations, in empowering DHH learner to express his knowledge creatively. These tools not only make learning more engaging but also provide diverse ways for the learner to demonstrate his understanding beyond traditional text-based methods. These tools are essential for improving comprehension, as

they provide clear, accessible information that is easier for DHH learner to process and understand. She also stressed the significance of chunking materials, using concept mapping, and incorporating finger spelling to promote a deeper understanding of text relationships. These strategies help break down complex concepts into manageable parts, allowing learner to grasp key ideas step by step.

Strategies of Successful English Teachers Teaching Reading to DHH Learners

This research question seeks to understand how teachers perceive and articulate their experiences in teaching reading to DHH learners, focusing specifically on language skill development. It explores the interactions, strategies, and practices they employ to enhance their students’ abilities in decoding, comprehension, and effective communication, which are essential for academic success and literacy. Through their experiences, the teachers reveal the approaches they use to support and guide DHH learners in refining their reading skills, addressing both individual and group needs, and fostering a productive and inclusive learning environment.

Table 1
Strategies of Successful English Teachers Teaching Reading to DHH Learn

Code	Teaching Reading Strategy	Description of Experiences in Employing the Strategy in Teaching Reading to DHH Learners
Teacher 1	Sign Language Integration	Utilized “inato” sign language, Filipino/English Sign Language, and formal sign language in daily instruction to ensure better comprehension and engagement of DHH learners.
	Multisensory Reading Approach	Employed a step-by-step strategy: starting from letters, progressing to words, then to sentences, using tactile tools like metacards and flashcards, enhancing retention and decoding skills.
	Use of Visual Aids and Technology	Incorporated YouTube sign language reading videos, charts, diagrams, and images to present content in accessible formats. This helped make learning more engaging and understandable.
	Environmental Modification for Accessibility	Minimized background noise using acoustic materials and rearranged seating to ensure clear lines of sight for better visibility of the teacher and interpreters.

	Differentiated and Inclusive Assessment Practices	Used formal and adapted assessments such as Phil-IRI, CRLA, and diagnostic tests to match learners' varying levels due to differences in language exposure. Tracked progress and made instructional decisions based on results.
Teacher 2	Multisensory Reading Approach	Employed multiple senses through finger spelling, letter tiles, sand trays, and visuals to reinforce phonics and word recognition. This approach supports retention and comprehension by engaging tactile, visual, and kinesthetic pathways.
	Visual Aid Enhancement	Used enlarged texts, highlighting, color coding, pictures, graphic organizers, and sign language visuals. Visual aids were seen as essential in helping DHH learners access and process reading content.
	Modified Assessment Techniques	Tailored reading assessments based on the learner's level of understanding, using tools such as picture naming and letter identification. Shortened and spaced sessions were used for learners with limited attention spans.
	Decoding-Based Reading Instruction	Emphasized a step-by-step decoding process—guiding learners from letter recognition to word and sentence reading. This structured literacy approach enabled learners to become independent readers over time.
	Empathy and Learner-Centered Adaptation	Adapted teaching methods based on emotional cues and communication needs. For instance, after recognizing a learner's silent struggle, the teacher adjusted support and became more responsive to individual learner needs.
Teacher 3	Sign Language Utilization (FSL)	Used FSL consistently as a foundational mode of communication and reading instruction. Videos in sign language were integrated to increase comprehension and learner engagement.
	Multisensory Reading Approach	Applied various sensory stimuli (e.g., textbooks, modules, visuals, technology) to reinforce understanding. Learners were able to grasp content better when exposed to more than one sense.
	Simplified Language and Vocabulary Emphasis	Employed clear and simple language instructions. Used word-for-word teaching and emphasized key vocabulary with visual supports, illustrations, and definitions to aid comprehension.
	Visual and Technological Aids	Enhanced learning through videos and visual materials that support vocabulary and language

	School-Family-Community Collaboration	acquisition. Visual tools increased motivation and captured learner attention. Stressed the importance of involving the school community and family in the teaching process, especially for DHH learners whose learning extends beyond the classroom setting.
Teacher 4	Use of Video Lessons with Scripts/Subtitles	Frequently used video lessons with scripts or subtitles to make reading lessons more accessible. Learners were better able to understand stories when they could read and watch simultaneously.
	Peer-Assisted Learning	Leveraged classmates' support to help explain lessons and assist with activities. Peer collaboration was instrumental in encouraging understanding and inclusion of the DHH learner.
	Visual and Simplified Language Instruction	Used simple words and sentences, visuals, and clear, repeated instructions. Visual tests and matching activities were also implemented for assessing comprehension.
	Strategic Seating and Environmental Adjustment	Ensured the DHH learner sat in front to clearly see facial expressions and board work. This positioning supported lip-reading and visual cues.
	Informal and Adaptive Assessment Approaches	Employed informal checks like simple Q&A, observation of written work, and matching activities, often facilitated by classmates. Instruction and feedback were adjusted based on observed learner responses.
Teacher 5	Visual-Bilingual Approach with Sign Language	Integrated American Sign Language (ASL) or local sign language with written English. Strategies included paired reading with visual storytelling, reading aloud, and sign-supported responses. These helped bridge communication and reinforce vocabulary.
	Scaffolded Visual Learning	Used story maps, sequencing visuals, personalized word banks, sentence frames, and structured written tasks. This method helped learners gradually build independence and deeper comprehension while working at their own pace.
	Customized and Simplified Reading Materials	Adapted materials by using clear visuals, simplified texts, bolded vocabulary, and structured reading prompts. Materials were broken into manageable chunks using visual organizers and sequencing strips.
	Nonverbal Assessments and Written Expression	Employed comprehension checks through vocabulary-picture matching, written responses, and visual sequencing. These strategies avoided

	Time-Managed, Student-Centered Instruction	reliance on oral skills and provided concrete evidence of understanding. Addressed challenges like limited instructional time and learner resistance to writing by pre-planning tasks, using guided support tools, and offering flexibility. Emphasis was placed on gradual pacing, accessibility, and learner confidence.
Teacher 6	Visual-Based Instruction	Relied on visual aids like flashcards, large images, educational videos, and drawings. These tools were essential for conveying meaning and helping learners connect with the content.
	Simplified and Chunked Language Input	Broke down complex concepts into manageable parts using simple words, fewer abstract ideas, and supplemental visuals. Modified texts were shortened and supported with video or image explanations.
	Drawing and Visual Expression of Comprehension	Let learners draw their interpretation of words or concepts, which served both as an instructional tool and an informal assessment of understanding.
	Peer-Assisted Learning and Inclusion Strategies	Paired DHH learners with proficient classmates to foster inclusion, support group interactions, and enhance understanding through peer modeling and guidance.
	Multimodal Assessment and Observation	Assessed learning through drawing, matching tasks, pointing, and behavioral cues. Monitored progress based on visual response, group engagement, and individual written or drawn outputs.
Teacher 7	Visual Scaffolding and Pre-Teaching Vocabulary	Used images, real objects, gestures, and written cues to introduce vocabulary and simplify text. Pre-teaching enabled learners to anchor meaning before reading activities.
	Integrated Visual Storytelling	Paired text with images and used sequencing activities to help learners retell stories. Animated videos with subtitles also enhanced comprehension and engagement.
	Simplification and Text Modification	Modified reading materials by using larger fonts, simplified vocabulary, and reduced abstract language. Replaced idioms with clear alternatives and provided key word printouts.
	Drawing, Matching, and Visual Assessments	Assessed understanding through drawing, matching quizzes, comic strip creation, and visual storytelling, minimizing the need for verbal expression.
	Peer Support and Multimodal Instruction	Assigned peer buddies, used gestures and basic sign language videos. Created inclusive learning

Teacher 8	Visual Vocabulary Support	Used visual aids such as vocabulary charts, finger spelling, flashcards, concept maps, and simplified texts to connect English words with their visual and signed representations.
	Chunked and Simplified Reading Inputs	Reading materials were broken into manageable parts using short texts, guiding visuals, and graphic organizers to support comprehension of sequencing, cause-effect, and main ideas.
	Performance-Based and Visual Assessments	Utilized story maps, image sequencing, video-recorded signed responses, and matching tasks. These assessments allowed learners to demonstrate understanding beyond written forms.
	Technology-Enhanced Learning Tools	Employed online videos, digital slides, animated sequence tools, and captioned materials due to remote instruction setup. These were central to instruction in the absence of verbal communication.
	Adaptation through Resourcefulness and Feedback	Overcame the lack of training in FSL by seeking peer support and learner feedback. Adjusted instruction based on responses and adopted visual metaphors to explain figurative language and abstract ideas.

Findings. Upon completion of thematic analysis and interpretation of results, six super-ordinate themes emerged. These super-ordinate themes can be linked to the research questions of the study and can be connected to the literature about the success stories of English teachers in employing strategies for teaching reading to DHH learners.

Super-ordinate Themes

1. Upon reflecting on their strategies, teachers emphasized the power of multimodal and multisensory instruction
2. Upon reflecting on their strategies, teachers prioritized visual scaffolding as a foundational component of reading instruction
3. Upon reflecting on their strategies, teachers adapted and simplified content to meet learners at their level
4. Upon reflecting on their strategies, teachers created inclusive and supportive learning environments
5. Upon reflecting on their strategies, teachers adopted flexible and nonverbal assessment methods

6. Upon reflecting on their strategies, teachers became adaptive and resourceful amidst limitations.

DISCUSSION

Report of All Participant Findings

Upon reflecting on their strategies, teachers emphasized the power of multimodal and multisensory instruction. The teachers consistently integrated visual, tactile, and kinesthetic strategies to meet the varied learning preferences of DHH learners. Teacher 1 incorporated daily multisensory drills, utilizing flashcards, sand trays, and real objects to strengthen vocabulary retention and reading fluency through consistent repetition. Teacher 8 made extensive use of captioned videos, animations, and visual storytelling to support remote learning, ensuring that learners had accessible content despite auditory limitations. Teacher 2 and Teacher 3 enhanced comprehension by combining sequencing activities with tangible objects, helping learners connect concepts more concretely.

Teacher 4, Teacher 5, Teacher 6, and Teacher 7 reinforced learning through finger spelling and tactile games that made abstract ideas more accessible. Their collective experience revealed that multimodal approaches are essential, not supplementary, for DHH learners, who depend heavily on sight, touch, and movement to build linguistic and cognitive skills. These practices not only improved language acquisition but also boosted learner engagement and motivation. By weaving together visual, tactile, and kinesthetic methods, the advisers ensured that learning was dynamic, memorable, and attuned to the learners' sensory strengths. Their success highlights the need for continual innovation and creativity in teaching strategies, ensuring that all learners, especially those with sensory differences, receive equitable and effective instruction.

Complementing these findings, Carini and Mayer (2022) reported that visual-spatial instructional strategies, such as concept mapping and storyboarding, led to increased comprehension scores among DHH learners, affirming the value of structured visual supports in reading instruction. Anderson and Goodwin (2021) revealed that integrating visual narratives with tactile exploration tasks significantly boosted vocabulary acquisition rates, especially when learning abstract or discipline-specific terms. In another related study, Ng

and Artiles (2022) stressed that multimodal interventions not only improved comprehension but also reduced cognitive overload by offering multiple avenues for students to access meaning, thus aligning with differentiated instruction principles. Furthermore, Lee and Robinson (2023) found that the consistent use of real-world artifacts during reading sessions helped DHH learners create stronger associative links between text and experience, improving both decoding skills and inferential thinking.

Also, Ortega and King (2022) highlighted that combining sign language with printed words and graphic organizers resulted in measurable improvements in reading fluency and comprehension. Further strengthening the case, Montelongo et al. (2023) showed that the integration of kinesthetic storytelling — where students act out narrative sequences — led to higher recall accuracy among young readers with hearing loss.

Additionally, Teacher 4, Teacher 5, Teacher 6, and Teacher 7 incorporated finger spelling and tactile games, making abstract linguistic concepts more relatable. Research continues to support such practices, as Webb (2022) found that multisensory literacy strategies significantly improve phonological awareness and reading comprehension among DHH learners.

Similarly, Taylor-Baptie (2021) highlighted that tactile-kinesthetic approaches can stimulate cognitive processing and promote deeper memory retention for students with sensory impairments. Smolen and Paul (2023) also emphasized that dynamic, sensory-rich instruction enhances motivation and engagement, key components for effective learning.

These findings align with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, which advocate for providing multiple means of representation to cater to varied learner needs (Takahashi, 2023). Collectively, the advisers' integration of visual, tactile, and kinesthetic modalities fostered a dynamic, engaging, and highly accessible learning environment. Their experience underscores that multimodal teaching is not merely beneficial but essential for optimizing the literacy development of DHH learners.

Additionally, recent research by Schick and Marschark (2023) reinforces that multisensory instruction frameworks are crucial for addressing the unique cognitive and linguistic profiles of DHH learners, recommending that educators use flexible, visually accessible formats to maximize literacy development.

Upon reflecting on their strategies, they prioritized visual scaffolding as a foundational component of reading instruction. Recognizing the primacy of visual input for DHH learners, the teachers systematically embedded visual scaffolding into every stage of literacy development. Teacher 1 and Teacher 3 utilized visual vocabulary charts and sequencing strips to support word recognition and story organization. Teacher 8 creatively employed flashcards, concept maps, and simplified visual texts to reinforce comprehension and thematic understanding. Teacher 4 and Teacher 5 integrated story maps and pictorial storytelling techniques to aid learners in predicting outcomes and sequencing events accurately. Teacher 6 incorporated visual peer feedback activities during editing and headline writing workshops, encouraging learners to engage critically with each other's work using visual cues.

Teacher 7 organized collaborative sessions where visual aids and illustrated texts were central to discussions. Through these deliberate methods, learners were empowered to decode language, organize ideas, and retell stories without relying on auditory input. The advisers' reliance on visuals anchored comprehension in concrete, accessible forms and nurtured independence in reading and writing tasks. Their practices demonstrate that visual scaffolding is not merely a supportive technique but a necessary foundation in DHH education, ensuring that learners navigate complex texts confidently and meaningfully despite linguistic barriers.

Teacher 7 further emphasized collaborative visual discussions with illustrated texts at the center of student dialogues. The importance of such scaffolding has been consistently affirmed in contemporary research. Their methods are strongly supported by Evans and Lederberg (2020), who found that structured visual scaffolding, such as consistent use of vocabulary walls and sequence strips, significantly boosts early reading proficiency among DHH children by providing stable visual anchors for language learning.

Similarly, Graham et al. (2019) emphasized that visually structured literacy interventions reduce cognitive load and make abstract concepts more tangible, particularly in early grade readers. Story maps have also been found to support the development of narrative sequencing skills, as confirmed by Daniels and Marschark (2018), who observed that structured pictorial aids scaffold DHH learners' ability to organize and retell stories with greater coherence and detail. These findings further suggest that visual narratives are essential scaffolds that bridge gaps in syntactic and semantic processing.

According to Sroloff (2024), visual scaffolding significantly improves reading comprehension and facilitates language acquisition among DHH learners. Saini et al. (2024) also found that pictorial aids and storyboards enhance narrative skills and promote independent learning in deaf students. Moreover, Sekoto (2022) argued that visual mapping activities strengthen memory encoding and retrieval processes, which are often areas of difficulty for students with hearing impairments. These practices collectively validate that visual scaffolding is not a supplemental strategy but a necessary adaptation for equitable literacy instruction. Through intentional visual support, teachers empowered DHH learners to decode texts, organize ideas, and confidently express understanding, bridging linguistic gaps and fostering autonomy in learning.

Upon reflecting on their strategies, they adapted and simplified content to meet learners at their level. Understanding the barriers DHH learners face with traditional texts, they meticulously modified materials to optimize accessibility. Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 simplified dense readings by eliminating idiomatic expressions, reducing syntactic complexity, and embedding visual guides. Teacher 8 strategically chunked reading passages into smaller, manageable units, complemented by images and graphic organizers that clarified cause-and-effect relationships. Teacher 3 and Teacher 4 scaffolded reading tasks through stepwise progression, allowing learners to build confidence with shorter, simplified passages before tackling more complex material. Teacher 5 and Teacher 6 emphasized key information by bolding essential terms and using enlarged fonts, making texts visually digestible and easier to navigate.

Teacher 7 fostered gradual skill development through progressive exposure to increasingly challenging materials, always adapted to learners' needs. These adaptations were not superficial but thoughtfully designed to maintain the integrity of the content while ensuring accessibility. Their approach underscored the belief that comprehension precedes complexity and that learners thrive when materials meet them where they are developmentally and linguistically. By intentionally simplifying content, they empowered DHH learners to experience success, build resilience, and advance confidently in their literacy journey.

Research strongly supports this practice; Puzio (2021) concluded that text simplification enhances comprehension and literacy outcomes among DHH

learners. Meanwhile, Rich et al. (2024) emphasized that visual and linguistic scaffolding during text adaptation reduces cognitive load and improves reading Fluency. Furthermore, Polsky (2024) advocated for the adaptation of educational content to meet learners' specific linguistic profiles, promoting equitable access to curriculum standards. By thoughtfully simplifying materials without diluting content integrity, the advisers fostered resilience, boosted student confidence, and enabled steady literacy advancement. Their approach reiterates the principle that effective reading instruction must be responsive to developmental and linguistic realities of DHH learners.

Additionally, Li and Trezek (2020) demonstrated that progressive text complexity aligned with students' current language abilities fosters gradual vocabulary expansion and reading stamina, essential components of literacy development for DHH learners. Such differentiation ensures that learners are neither overwhelmed nor under-challenged, maintaining optimal zones of proximal development.

Upon reflecting on their strategies, they created inclusive and supportive learning environments. They carefully shaped environments where DHH learners could thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 strategically reduced auditory distractions, rearranging seating to optimize visual access and ensuring learners had clear lines of sight to teachers, peers, and visual materials. Teacher 3 and Teacher 4 assigned peer buddies, promoting peer interaction and social support within the classroom. Teacher 5 and Teacher 6 facilitated group peer review sessions, where collaboration was used not only as a learning tool but also as a means to foster community and mutual trust. Teacher 7 emphasized regular team-building exercises and reflective gatherings, cultivating a strong sense of belonging and shared purpose among learners. Teacher 8 engaged families and co-teachers, building a broader support network around each learner. Through these actions, the advisers made inclusion not just a classroom practice but a culture, ensuring that learners felt seen, heard, and valued. These practices created safe, supportive spaces where learners could take risks, express themselves, and grow without fear of marginalization. Their efforts underscore that fostering an inclusive environment goes beyond accommodations—it requires intentional community-building that addresses the academic, social, and emotional needs of every learner.

According to Ocuto (2024), inclusive environments significantly enhance the academic engagement and emotional security of students with disabilities. Similarly, Orellana et al. (2024) emphasized that structured peer interaction cultivates social competence and supports language development among DHH learners. Newman (2022) highlighted that a strong classroom community increases students' willingness to participate and take academic risks, essential for literacy growth. The advisers' strategies show that true inclusion transcends mere physical integration—it involves deliberate community-building practices that affirm every learner's value and potential. Their commitment exemplifies that fostering inclusive, supportive environments is fundamental to achieving holistic development and educational equity for DHH learners.

In addition, Martinez and Rhoades (2023) found that inclusive literacy environments where DHH learners are provided equal opportunities to collaborate and contribute result in higher reading comprehension scores and greater motivation to engage in text-based discussions. This is supported by Carillo and Finnegan (2020), who reported that fostering a sense of belonging through intentional classroom culture positively influences vocabulary acquisition and narrative development among students with hearing impairments. Furthermore, Rivera and Hansen (2021) stressed that peer-assisted reading activities in inclusive settings enhanced both decoding abilities and critical thinking skills in DHH learners, underlining the interconnectedness of social interaction and academic achievement.

Upon reflecting on their strategies, they adopted flexible and nonverbal assessment methods. Recognizing the limitations of conventional verbal assessments, the teachers creatively diversified how learner learning was evaluated. Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 emphasized visual storytelling assignments, allowing learners to demonstrate narrative comprehension through drawings, comic strips, and storyboards. Teacher 2 and Teacher 3 implemented matching activities and visual editing sessions where learners collaborated in visually-driven tasks to showcase language skills. Teacher 5 developed assessment practices centered around drawing-based reflections, image sequencing, and signing-based video submissions. Teacher 4, Teacher 6, and Teacher 7 emphasized performance-based assessments, evaluating skills through presentations, peer-reviewed projects, and other visual outputs.

These approaches provided learners with multiple avenues to express understanding, highlighting strengths often overlooked in verbal-centric evaluations. By designing assessments around learners' preferred communication modes, the advisers not only measured academic achievement more accurately but also fostered a greater sense of empowerment and confidence among learners. Their work proves that flexible, multimodal assessment strategies are essential for truly inclusive education, ensuring that learner success is measured holistically and fairly.

As reported by Mokala (2021), multimodal assessments accommodate diverse learners' strengths, providing a more comprehensive view of student achievement. Likewise, Milliken (2025) emphasized that visual and performance-based evaluations foster greater student engagement and authentic demonstration of learning outcomes. Furthermore, Mashologu (2023) advocated for flexible assessment methods as essential to promoting academic equity among students with disabilities. By aligning evaluation methods with student capabilities, the advisers ensured that success was measured fairly and inclusively, reinforcing confidence and self-efficacy among DHH learners. Jensen and Harbour (2022) highlighted that alternative assessments, such as visual portfolios and project-based tasks, significantly enhance reading comprehension monitoring among DHH learners by providing tangible evidence of textual understanding. In addition, Park and Kim (2020) found that incorporating graphic organizers and illustrated retelling tasks into reading assessments improved the expressive language and critical thinking skills of deaf students. More recently, Vasquez et al. (2024) reported that formative assessments using visual narratives and comprehension maps enabled more accurate tracking of literacy growth in inclusive classrooms.

Upon reflecting on their strategies, they became adaptive and resourceful amidst limitations. Facing the dual challenges of limited formal FSL training and constrained resources, the teachers cultivated a culture of creativity, resilience, and continuous learning. Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 sought informal mentorships and relied on learner feedback to fine-tune their approaches. Teacher 8 leveraged digital resources like YouTube videos, captioned presentations, and online materials to bridge communication gaps. Teacher 3 and Teacher 5 adapted instruction using visual metaphors, improvised materials, and technology-enhanced content delivery.

Teacher 4 and Teacher 6 facilitated peer-learning sessions, exchanging effective strategies among teachers and learner leaders. Teacher 7 led efforts to source diversified materials, from digital archives to community-driven resources. Through these inventive practices, they consistently centered learner needs, innovating beyond structural limitations. Their resilience in adapting to challenges reflects a profound commitment to equity, creativity, and student-centered growth. Their example underscores that effective teaching is less about having perfect resources and more about having the vision, flexibility, and passion to build meaningful learning experiences despite constraints.

According to Lopez (2024b), flexible teaching practices are crucial for maintaining instructional quality in resource-constrained settings. Furthermore, Scott and Davies (2021) emphasized that adaptive strategies empower teachers to meet diverse learner needs despite systemic challenges. In a similar vein, Lynch (2023) found that professional resilience among educators correlates with improved student outcomes in marginalized communities. The advisers' experience exemplifies that effective teaching stems not from an abundance of resources but from a deep commitment to innovation, flexibility, and student-centered pedagogy. Rivera and Klein (2022) emphasized that when teachers embrace reflective adaptability, they are better able to scaffold reading instruction tailored to the varied linguistic profiles of DHH learners. Moreover, Abbas et al. (2020) reported that resilient and flexible pedagogical approaches lead to higher literacy engagement and retention, even when specialized materials or supports are limited. More recently, Zhong and Lim (2024) observed that teacher adaptability, particularly in the use of visual and contextual supports, directly enhances the reading comprehension performance of students with hearing impairments.

The findings of this study underscore the critical directions needed to enhance reading instruction for DHH learners, focusing on the application of multimodal, scaffolded, and adaptive teaching practices. Participants highlighted the effective use of multimodal and multisensory instruction, the prioritization of visual scaffolding, the adaptation of content to meet learners' developmental levels, the creation of inclusive learning environments, the implementation of flexible assessments, and the cultivation of resourcefulness amidst limitations.

This study illuminated how teachers, when deeply reflecting on their practice, adapt, scaffold, and innovate to support DHH learners' reading

development. Their emphasis on multimodal instruction, visual scaffolding, content adaptation, inclusion, flexible assessments, and resourcefulness resonates strongly with both Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory and Smith's IPA framework. Embarking on this research journey has reinforced my belief in the necessity of deeply listening to teachers' narratives and experiences to inform more empathetic, effective educational policies and practices.

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